
TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE....

A Column on Consumer Issues

by Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem's
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April 9, 2003

VACUUM CLEANER SALES

When the vacuum cleaner just can't keep up with the dust bunnies hopping around your home's floors, it may be time to shop for a new one. There are many choices available in the vacuum cleaner market, and deciding what vacuum to buy depends on your cleaning needs and personal preferences.

Upright vacuums are a popular choice because they are often easy to handle and store. Canister vacuums might suit you if your home has more bare floors than carpeting or rugs. The typical vacuum cleaner should clean bare surfaces and carpeting of different heights. A 20- to 30-foot power cord that can be stored in the machine will give you roaming flexibility in a large room. Dark areas under furniture can be rediscovered if a headlamp is on the power nozzle.

Some companies may make claims about their vacuum cleaners being effective in helping with many health problems because the units are supposedly much like filtration systems. To date, most of the best known models have not been able to provide documentation of such health claims.

There is a tremendous price range for vacuum cleaners. Be sure you shop around. It's always best to spend some time trying out several different styles and models before making a decision about which type of vacuum to purchase. Here are some things to consider when comparing different models:

- Pay attention to how wide the area cleaned is with each pass of the machine.
- Run the vacuum cleaner along walls and into corners to see how it performs in tight areas.
- Are the controls conveniently located and easy to operate?
- Is the dust bag easy to replace or clean? Is it big enough so you don't have to change it too frequently?
- The vacuum cleaner's weight should be manageable. Does it have a handle for transport?
- Adjustable motor power will allow you to increase or reduce speed and suction to suit your cleaning chore.

- Vacuums can be loud, so make sure the noise level is acceptable.

A North Dakota law requires that people who come to your door offering to sell any product or service must carry a transient merchant license issued by the Attorney General's office. However, some vacuum cleaner companies get around the law by offering to provide in-home demonstrations to potential customers or telling consumers they have won a prize for a "free" carpet cleaning. The salesperson calls to set up an appointment for the carpet cleaning or to deliver the prize. If you make an appointment, this is considered an invitation to the home, and the salesperson does not need a transient merchant license to sell vacuums at your home.

If you do purchase a vacuum at home, North Dakota law says you have three days to cancel the purchase. People age 65 or older have 15 business days to cancel home solicitation sales. The seller must tell you about these rights to cancel verbally and in writing or the deal is voidable.

Take the time to review all offers. Don't be pressured into making an immediate decision or signing a contract on-the-spot to purchase an expensive vacuum.

The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates allegations of fraud in the marketplace. Investigators also mediate individual complaints against businesses. If you have a consumer problem or question, call the Consumer Protection Division at 328-3404, toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or 1-800-366-6888 (w/TTY). This article and other consumer information is located on our website at www.ag.state.nd.us.

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